

# AN ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC,

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## SCARCITY OF CORN.

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I wish to communicate to the Public my sentiments on the present high prices of Corn, Grain, and Bread, and also on the propriety or impropriety of immediately prohibiting the Malt Distillers from using any sort of Grain, during the remainder of this season, or until a given time after the meeting of next Session of Parliament. I think it is necessary the Public in general should be informed (if any can be ignorant of it), that the present high prices of Bread are chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the shortness of the last year's Crop of Wheat; and of that article, together with every species of Grain, having suffered extremely from an almost unparalleled bad harvest. This latter melancholy event greatly increased the evil, naturally and always attendant on a deficiency of the Crops, by further lessening the production of them.

It must be obvious to every one, that both the Executive Government and the Legislature are endeavouring, by every means in their power to lessen the present pressure of the times, and to ameliorate the situation of all his Majesty's loyal subjects. The restricting the Bakers from selling any Bread until it shall have been baked at least twenty-four hours, and the resolution come to by the House of Peers, restraining themselves and families, and recommending to others, to consume no more Bread than after the rate of a quartern loaf per head per week, it may be fairly hoped, will be attended with material good effect. I may be excused here quoting an old proverb, "*It's certainly better to have half a loaf than no bread.*" When I had the honour to enter the Committee-room on Saturday last, where the selected Members were met to deliberate on the expediency of the Distillers continuing, or not, to work the remainder of the season, I own I went in with a mind made up on the propriety of their being immediately stopt from the use of any Grain; but I must also own, when I had heard the matter fully and candidly discussed, and the evidence of respectable persons taken thereon, my opinion was, *in a certain degree*, changed. My reasons for such a change of opinion I think it incumbent on me to give to the Public. From the resources of information which I have, and the knowledge which it may be presumed, without vanity, I possess, of the Corn Trade, I can venture to assure the Public, the Crop of Barley was last year a good average Crop, rather abundant than otherwise in quantity, though unfortunately the major part of it much injured in quality by the melancholy wetness of the harvest, insomuch that a very small part only of the whole can be made into good Malt; and learning, from the evidence given in the Committee, that the Distillers would not want more than about fifty-three thousand quarters of Malt, and those inferior Barleys, to carry on their business through the present season; and believing (I had almost said, knowing,) as I do, that that quantity is so very inconsiderable a portion of the large quantities of those Barleys now in the hands of the Growers and Dealers, my mind is satisfied it will be more for the benefit of the Public at



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large that the Distillers should, *under certain restrictions*, be allowed to buy and distil the above-mentioned quantity of Malt and inferior Barleys, than that they should be immediately prohibited the use of all Grain; and more especially when I add, that it was given in evidence that the very refuse of the Malt and Barley, ~~say the wash~~ and the grains after the spirits have been extracted, become a material part of the food of about thirty-two thousand fat bullocks and about ten thousand fat hogs per annum; and, as beef, bacon, and pork, are already at very high prices, there would be but too much reason to apprehend the taking those supplies out of the market would tend to an almost immediate advance on those articles, which are already far too dear! The restrictions which I would, with great deference, humbly presume to recommend to the Legislature to lay the Malt-Distillers under, are, that they should not be allowed to buy a bushel more than the quantity above-mentioned, before the 15th of October next; their buyings on Monday the 24th February instant, to be included in said quantity; and that each Malt-Distiller be required to give in an account, weekly, of his purchases of Malt and Barley to the Excise-Office; and that, as soon as the whole shall amount to fifty-three thousand quarters, it shall be declared by the Commissioners of Excise in the London Gazette; which declaration, or notice, should be a legal prohibition to all and every Malt-Distiller from purchasing any more Malt or Barley prior to the period above mentioned. And inasmuch as it was, last Saturday, given in evidence before the Committee, that the highest prices (those witnesses knew of) which the Distillers had lately given for Barley in Mark-lane, had been from forty shillings to forty-two shillings per quarter, and that, not long ago, they had purchased Barley from ~~about~~ prices down to thirty-four shillings per quarter, I would recommend that the Legislature should restrain the Distillers from giving any higher price than forty-two shillings per quarter for Barley; whereby I humbly conceive the Brewer would be secured from all hazard of the Distiller buying any Barley of a quality fit for malting; and it would also secure those who may be buyers of that article, to be ground into meal for bread, from having any competitors in the market, at prices higher than forty-two shillings per quarter.

I am,

The Public's devoted, humble Servant,

A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

LONDON, Feb. 24, 1800.

*Christopher St.*

ANDREW WILSON, Printer, Wild-Court, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

